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Book Review—Leading Ethically in Schools and Other Organizations

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Kramer, Bruce, H., & Enomoto, Ernestine, K. (2014). *Leading Ethically in Schools and Other Organizations: Inquiry, Case Studies, and Decision-Making (2nd edition).* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 169 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4758-0638-0

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PROBLEM AND PURPOSE

The problem of conflict in schools, universities, and organizations generally, suggests contemporary democratic leaders must do more than create laws and policies to guide behavior. Reactionary strategies such as legislation, policies, and practices of increasing security are necessary but unsatisfactory ways to address conflict. Educating administrators and organizational leaders in a democratic leadership decision-making method to address and resolve conflict is a proactive approach. The purpose of *Leading Ethically in Schools and Other Organizations* was to explore dilemmas often rooted in conflict experienced by P-12 educators and organizational learning leaders and to provide guidance in moral and ethical decision-making. Synthesizing centuries of scholarship in leadership ethics for democracies, Kramer and Enomoto offer a DIRR (defined below) method for ethical decision-making in a democracy. In addition, case study applications offer useful cases for professional development or higher education classes preparing educational and organizational leaders.

DEFINITIONS

Democracy is defined by the authors as a "meta-ethic to respond to the diverse needs of individuals and groups, particularly as they come into conflict with one another" (p. 95). Democratic leadership, argue Kramer and Enomoto, is different from other forms of leadership as it is based on democratic ethics. Democratic ethics are defined as arising from a societal agreement on "the importance of human reasoning, the freedom to choose our individual actions, and the belief that it is possible to live peacefully with others" (p. 5). Democratic leadership ethics therefore means *all* constituents of schools, higher education or other organizations must be served fairly, equitably and respectfully. Democratic leaders uphold and honor shared democratic values and beliefs—justice, freedom, and equality that unify the

society. Students are prepared in schools and universities to accept their responsibility and privilege to contribute to society as productive and good citizens in a democracy (pp. 50-51). Each person matters, each person is entitled to equal consideration regardless of individual differences and sociocultural backgrounds.

The DIRR ethical decision-making method, created by Kramer and Enomoto was based on consideration of John Dewey's concept of democracy and democratic practices as an inquiry method for working ethical problems (Dewey, 1916, 1927, 1930, 1934, 1938; Dewey & Tufts, 1932a, 1932b). The researchers themselves former professors of educational leadership with a lifetime of work teaching school leaders, researching school leadership and observing leaders at work in a variety of organizations. Bruce Kramer was Dean of the College of Education, Leadership, and Counseling at the University of St. Thomas, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Ernestine Enomoto was a professor of educational administration at the University of Hawaii, Manoa, formerly at the University of Maryland.

THE DIRR METHOD

Diversification in USA society means educational leaders must be responsive to local community needs while also honoring global principles of social justice. In particular, school administrators must know and understand a variety of ethical frameworks and professional codes of ethics in order to serve their communities. A guide for school and organizational leaders in solving complex problems, Kramer and Enomoto's four-step method of ethical decision-making, DIRR refers to: (1) description, (2) interpretation, (3) rehearsal, and (4) rediscernment (p. 109) to be applied to any conflict situation.

Description involves leaders thoroughly interrogating the case from multiple angles until they are able to state the facts of the situation, including who is involved, even those not directly involved but with a stake in the outcome, the organizational and policy context, and the legal, ethical and moral issues of the case.

Interpretation requires the leader or administrator to apply and consider different possible ethical frames for their utility in solving the conflict. Four sources of ethical tension are identified which can help the leader consider democratic ethics and its implications. Each of these tensions are to be considered during the interpretation phase of ethical decision-making. First, duties-based ethics refers to ethics regarding obligations or privileges based on laws and rules, including religion, which prescribe what a person ought to do to be good. Kant's moral precepts or imperatives are duties-based, prescribing moral codes of conduct such as treating all human with dignity and respect by viewing people as valued end, not as a means to achieve a more important end. Duties-based ethics explains conflicts occur between individuals and groups because "people operate from what they believe to be their ethical duties in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities" (p. 22). Thus, the Ten Commandments, the Five Pillars of Islam, the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights are all duties-based ethics which may conflict with another. Personal and professional duties-based ethics may collide. Moreover, given different categorical imperatives for groups, duties-based ethics may be insufficient in and of themselves to resolve conflicts in schools and organizations.

Second, desires-based ethics as a source of ethical tension points to conflict over what is the "good" in education and society. What is best for the majority in a school or organization may be considered the desired end or outcome. Dewey reminds us what is good is relative, dependent on the historical context and changes based on time, people, and circumstances (p. 19). Third, virtue ethics are individual characteristics of a person where he or she decides what kind of a leader to be—the dispositions, character traits, or qualities.

A fourth and final source of ethical tension arises from good society ethics, or the ethics associated with the society or groups to which we belong. The multiple groups to which individuals belong may be prescriptive in their ethical codes of conduct and sometimes these conflict. A variety of social groupings to which we each may belong and our allegiances tested includes families, professions, religions, and regional affiliations. Meeting the ethical

requirements and expectations of any one group to which we belong may be readily accomplished. The challenge arises from conflicting allegiances and loyalties suggesting the leader use different ethical frames. Good society ethics asks that individuals consider what is good for the group, expectations for membership to the group, and the rights and responsibilities not only within the group but also among diverse groups within society (p. 19). Conflicts over old versus new, private versus public interest are familiar to school and organizational leaders in a democracy. The authors take each of these four sources of ethical conflict—duties-based ethics, desires-based ethics, virtue ethics, and good society ethics—and offer a means to resolve the conflicts through sound reasoning and applying the DIRR method. The third step in the DIRR method, rehearsal, will be described next.

Rehearsal is defined as thinking through the consequences of a proposed ethical decision. In the rehearsal phase the leader consciously reflects and contemplates the possibilities and creates a variety of possible action plans which enhances understanding of the challenges involved (p. 106). For example, the leader would consider costs and benefits for the individuals involved and the organization as a whole, and imagine the public's response to any one action plan from amongst several possible actions with their predicted consequences.

Fourth, the final step of ethical decision-making—*rediscernment*—means the leader then looks at the conflict or dilemma with new understanding and can discern to what extent a possible solution addresses the interests of all concerned (p. 158). Rediscernment allows the leader to consider how the dilemma might be perceived by others and he or she is therefore in a better position to take action. By using this four-step DIRR method the school or organizational leader teaches and models democratic leadership not by demanding others comply with rigid predetermined mandates, but by modeling and facilitating an inclusive method of decision-making. The leader can thus take into account contextual or cultural differences and nuances for equity. Thus, learning about others' points of view, listening, and reflecting while seeking common ground could be the school, university or organizational leader's most valuable tools.

To evaluate and self-assess whether a school or organization provides the necessary *ethical space* for reflection and ethical decision-making, the authors also include several leadership indicators. Does the leader cultivate and foster: (1) respect for diversity, (2) trust and openness, (3) opportunity for critical methods such as the DIRR method which moves beyond creating good for individuals and instead considers the collective good, and (4) a commitment of all to participate fully in the collective good of the school or organization? (p. 157). The authors conclude the study with case study applications for school and other organizational leaders.

Recommendation #1. A strength of the book is that the authors include consideration of knowledge from feminist ethics and ecofeminism, religious values, ethics and traditions—Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—and social justice leadership theory. However, it is Dewey's notion of democracy and ethical leadership that is the main influence on the DIRR model. Educational leaders in international contexts are encouraged to explore whether the DIRR method holds equally well for non-Western schools and organizations.

Recommendation #2. The non-linear DIRR method invites further reflection and integration of alternative perspectives within ethical leadership and decision-making literature and organizational practices. Leaders and researchers are encouraged to explore ways to connect or use in different contexts the various ethical decision-making models in the educational administration literature. For example, Duignan's (2012) research offered a ten-step method for ethical decision-making. The method included: (1) determine the nature of the situation; (2) conduct a thorough interrogation; (3) identify the players; (4) propose multiple viable optional courses of action; (5) apply legal requirements, then evaluate the ethical options in step 4; (6) select the best option that meets the ethical standards of the educational leadership profession; (7) explain and defend the selected plan of action to a close network of administrator colleagues; (8) develop a plan to implement the decision option in consultation with those who will be implementing the decision; (9) take action carefully and with good judgment for the common good; (10) reflect, learn and improve on the process (pp. 109-114).

Similarly, Buskey and Pitts (2013) suggest leaders use a five-step method of ethical checking before taking any action at all, to compare the consequences of different ethical paradigms including the ethic of care, the ethic of critique, and the ethic of justice. The five-step method, reportedly adapted from Dr. Martin Luther King's direct action model (1963), specifies: (1) seeking to understand different perspectives on the same problem, (2) aligning one's actions with one's own personal values, (3) examining one's own motives to ensure they are altruistic and not self-interested, (4) discussing the processes with others, and (5) continuing to grow and learn through asking questions to enhance understanding of self and others through dialogue and engagement (p. 78). Comparing these additional two ethical decision-making methods with Kramer and Enomoto's DIRR method, each have utility for democratic leaders.

Recommendation #3. The DIRR decision-making method could be a useful strategy for leaders implementing organizational renewal. Tenuto (2014, 2015) developed and applied a model for cultivating democratic professional practice in education which serves as a leadership and organizational foundation. The democratic professional practice in education (DPPE) model includes five central principles: (1) sharing purpose: higher purpose, culture of care, and participation in community, (2) sharing data: professional learning communities (PLCs), teachers as researchers, and collaboration, (3) sharing expertise: teacher professional communities (TPCs), research-based practices, and collegiality, (4) sharing leadership: collaborative leadership, teachers as leaders, instructional leadership, and genuine empowerment, and (5) sharing responsibility: civic responsibility, leadership for social justice, and commitment. Leaders are encouraged to share examples of their successes and challenges implementing the DIRR method as part of organizational and leadership renewal.

CONCLUSION

Conflict is a compelling issue for schools and organizations in our age of accountability and global connections. The decision-making method detailed in *Leading Ethically in Schools and Organizations* should be essential reading for educational and organizational leaders.

Leaders are encouraged to use the DIRR method for working ethical problems. To turn conflict into energy for the common good, leaders must know how to respond thoughtfully without privileging one group over another. The DIRR method provides leadership guidance in critical democratic ethics for the cultivation of an organization able to sustain peace, harmony, and productivity.

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